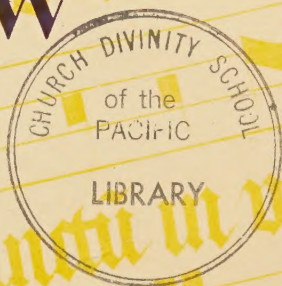



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Studies in Sacred Chant and Liturgy

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Volume I, Number 2

March-April, 1954

THE CHRISTIAN PASCHA IN THE FIRST CENTURIES OF THE CHURCH'S EXISTENCE

by Dom Leon Robert

Pascha nostrum immolatus est Christus

Christ our Pascha is immolated.

(Responsory of Quasimodo Sunday)

I. The First Forms of the Paschal Feast.

When, after Pentecost, the first Christian community was organized, how did it interpret and apply the prescriptions of the Lord? It has often been thought that the first great liturgical feast which was organized was that of Easter, which commemorates the most important aspects of the Redemption accomplished by Christ. Today, however, writers are inclined to believe that the first organized liturgical rites were those of the Sunday, weekly commemoration of the Resurrection of Christ, and that the annual feast of Easter borrowed for its own liturgy what custom had established for Sunday.¹ Thus it is Sunday, the first Christian feast-day, which has been the "germ cell" of the whole liturgical year.

The Book of Acts tells us about the first cultual meetings of the Christians. All Jewish converts, they continued to observe the practices of the Mosaic liturgy, and the Sabbath (Saturday) was a sacred day to them. They also had, however, distinctly Christian assemblies. At these the inspired books were read, primarily those of the Prophets which announced the Messiah, His passion, His sacrifice and His resurrection. At this time they also sang hymns and recited psalms and prayers. Finally, the Apostles who presided over them addressed the gathering, instructed catechumens and the faithful, and above all, said the Mass. This latter was probably composed of a long improvised prayer which

1. Cf. Callewaert, *Sacris erudiri*, p. 293-303 and 452-456; R. P. Danielou, *Bible et Liturgie*, p. 330

recalled the institution of Jesus and which reproduced the essential act of the Last Supper. The Apostle took some unleavened bread and the cup of wine mixed with water, pronounced the words of the transubstantiation, and all the faithful received the communion of the Body and Blood of Christ.

Perhaps, at the beginning, these eucharistic meetings took place as often as possible without a set date. On one hand, however, the Sabbath, always observed by the first Christians, and on the other, the feast of the Resurrection which took place the following day, must have very soon drawn the faithful to meet on that very day for their liturgical assembly. After having accomplished the Mosaic rites, they performed the Christian rites which were in a sense their fulfillment. After the refreshing rest of the Sabbath, it was less exhausting to pass a night of vigil and prayer as had been so recommended by the Lord, and at the end of this night, in the joy of the memory of the Resurrection of Christ, symbolized by the rising of the sun, in the memory also of the promise He had made to soon return, the Eucharist was celebrated. Then the day passed in the joy of a Paschal Alleluia. Thus was born the "Sunday" and its liturgy, composed of a long nocturnal vigil fashioned similarly to the Jewish Passover, and terminated with the Mass. We must note, however, that in this liturgy, although the Passion and the death of Christ are still at the focal point of the eucharistic mystery, the ceremony is concluded by the recollection of the Resurrection, and the Sunday itself is to be in essentials its commemoration.

Twenty years, at most, after Pentecost, Saint Paul, writing to the faithful of Corinth, gives us further information on the Sunday liturgy. This community was composed for the most part of converted pagans. They did not observe the Sabbath. We find among them, however, a new practice. Before the beginning of the Sunday vigil, they partook of a meal which is perhaps the earliest form of what will be later called the *agape*. This usage, however, brought on abuses. The rich did not wish to put at common disposal the foods which they had prepared, with the result that the poor suffered from hunger. Saint Paul had to get this lack of charity in order. For the rest the night was spent in vigils as in

the other churches. We must note, too, that for Saint Paul, at that time still, the most important points of the doctrine of the sacrifice of the Mass were to unite us with the death of Christ and prepare us for His return: *Every time you eat this bread and drink of this chalice you announce the death of the Lord until He shall return.* The mystery of the Resurrection is certainly not absent, but it seems as though subordinated to the idea of what the ancients called the "Parousia", the return of the Lord at the end of the world.

It is this liturgical ensemble, established very early, which furnished for the first day of the week the name of the "Lord's Day", the dominical day from which the term "Dominica" is derived, a name which was hallowed from before the end of the first century. From this dominical rite was to come the annual rite of the Feast of Easter.

When and how? We cannot say exactly, for we have no document on the matter before the middle of the second century, and at that time the Feast of Easter appears as an already ancient and venerable institution. What is remarkable, however, is that there were two types of Easter then, very different one from the other.¹

This suggests that a double tradition must have been created quite early. One, perhaps born in the churches which were at first composed mostly of converted Jews, celebrated an Easter very similar in both date and meaning to that of the Lord. The other, to the contrary, is an exceptionally solemn Sunday.

It is certain that the idea of commemorating the anniversary of the Redemption each year must have occurred very early to the Christians. As to the rest, the Jewish Pascha which was celebrated before their eyes—and which they celebrated themselves if they were Jewish converts—must have brought them to celebrate a very solemn Christian Easter, too. But exactly for this, this similarity with the Jewish usage must have caused certain communities to act as the

1. Cf. *Dict. de Theol. Cath.*, articles "Paques" and "Quartodecimans"

Lord himself did, and to unite in a certain manner the Jewish Passover and the Christian Easter.

It is exactly this custom which is found to have been practiced at Ephesus and in all the neighboring towns grouped together in Asia Minor about the year 150 A.D. The Asiatics claim to have kept this liturgy from St. John himself, and they are very attached to it. Here are its principal characteristics:

Firstly, the feast was celebrated on the same night on which the Jews celebrated their Passover. It was the night which began the 14th day of the month of Nizan, that is, the 14th day of the first moon of spring. Obviously they tried to make coincide the Paschal anniversary and the exact day on which the Lord celebrated the Last Supper. Since, however, the Jewish week, based only on the phases of the moon did not coincide with the week which had long since been adopted by the Christians, the result was that the 14th of Nizan could fall on any day of the Christian week. Thus the Asiatics celebrated their Easter as the same time that the Jews celebrated the Passover: at the time of their great Sabbath. It was somewhat rarely a Sunday. They emphasized by preference their evocation of the Supper of the Lord in eating a Paschal lamb, no doubt at the agape. In short, their rites remained close to those of the Jews.

On the other hand, this reproduction of the Last Supper corresponded very well with what we call Holy Thursday. And the following day was the anniversary, not of the Resurrection, but of Good Friday, that is, the day of the Passion and death of the Lord. Then, too, the Easter of the Asiatics had a serious character. It was almost a day of mourning. It is probable, too, that the Resurrection was not then explicitly evoked. Thus it was an Easter feast very different from the one of which we are accustomed to think.

At the same period, customs at Rome were maintained much more along the lines of ours. The Feast of Easter very solemn, the center of liturgical year, was always celebrated during the night of the Saturday to Sunday which

followed the first full moon of Spring. Thus the memory of the date of the Last Supper of the Lord was kept, but nobody troubled to follow the Jewish calendar, and above all, it was not a Holy Thursday which was commemorated, but the day of the Resurrection. Thus the Easter Feast is a very solemn Sunday, and its liturgical organization, with nocturnal vigil, lectures, chants, predication and then Mass at dawn, is, in sum, that of an ordinary Sunday.

This Easter Sunday has, however, a much more far-reaching meaning, for it is preceded by two holy days, Good Friday and Holy Saturday, which are days of fasting and penitence and in which are explicitly commemorated the Passion of the Lord, His death on the cross and His entombment. Thus, although the mystery of the Resurrection already has a very important place in the Easter feast, it remains, nevertheless, that over the ensemble of the three holy days the mystery of the death of the Lord maintained as yet its preponderant position. It is, moreover, a fact that among all the authors of the second century we can see that the word "Pascha" signifies primarily the commemoration of the death of the Lord. This term was already, for the Jews, frequently synonymous with the immolated lamb. One "ate" the Passover, and St. Paul says, "Our Pascha is the immolated Christ." (I, Cor., V, 7). Whereas, however, the Asiatics held close to this significance, at Rome, since it was possible to extend the solemnity over three days, Friday, Saturday and Sunday, the Sunday itself could be consecrated to the joy of the Resurrection.

Thus we find, in the middle of the second century, two types of paschal liturgy. Their divergence ended in scandalizing. At Rome people were astounded to see Christians celebrating Easter on another day, with other rites, in another spirit from that of the majority of Christians. It was somewhat of a breaking of the unity of the Church. There was a risk of schism. Since the Asiatics boasted of a tradition going back to St. John, the popes did not at first wish to condemn them. In the long run, however, their intervention was necessary.¹ St. Victor, who governed the Church from 189 to 199, had to forbid the oriental rites, too closely resembling

those of the Jews and too different from those of Rome. As to the rest, in order to convince the faithful of Ephesus that they were alone in following a liturgy in a sense schismatic, the Pope convoked provincial synods throughout all Christendom to which he proposed the question of the sense to give to the feast of Easter and to the liturgy which should be followed. It was, moreover, the first time in the history of the Church that we find a Pope exercising his universal jurisdiction. He was obeyed everywhere. The synods met and sent their answers to Rome. All were in favor of the Roman usage. From that time the Pope could consecrate definitely the unity of liturgical prayer throughout the whole Church in forbidding any other usages. We do not know the immediate result of the Roman decision, but Ephesus must have submitted very soon, for we no longer shall find the archaic liturgy of Easter, save, however, among a group of the faithful who became schismatic. They were called "quartodecimans" as they celebrated Easter on the 14th of Nizan. They united soon afterwards with heretical sects and did not disappear for some two or three centuries.

It was thus only at the end of the second century that unity was brought about in the Church for the celebration of Easter. This feast is, however, still far from resembling ours. It is as much the commemoration of the death of the Lord as of His Resurrection. It is comprised of three days, and we do not as yet find any certain alluding to baptism, although it is fairly certain that catechumens were baptized at that time, since at a very early period the three sacraments of baptism, confirmation and the first communion formed an intimately related unit. It is, moreover, that which permits us to understand how, in the centuries which are to follow, the present liturgy was little by little to become organized.

II. Toward the present Easter Feast.

At the beginning of the third century the feast of Easter was thus a celebration very different from that Jewish Passover which the Lord celebrated on the eve of His Passion . . .

very different, even, from that which the Lord had accomplished before His Apostles. He had then instituted the sacrifice of the Mass, two sacraments: Holy Eucharist and Holy Orders, and the Apostles had then made their first communion and received the sacerdotal ordination. All this was the inauguration of the series of decisive acts of the Lord by which He was to achieve the Redemption of mankind.

After the lapse of two centuries, the Church selected from among the liturgical rites those which were suited to the feast of the Christian Easter. There is no question at this point of conferring the sacrament of Holy Orders, and although in the three days in which the paschal liturgy took place the things that the Lord accomplished from Holy Thursday to the following Sunday were commemorated, successfully, it appears very evident that the most festive day — that which more and more deserves the name of Easter, is not Holy Thursday, but Sunday.

Nevertheless, this night from Saturday to Sunday is to retain something from Holy Thursday, the first communion of the newly baptized. The catechumens are, moreover, to be baptized all this same night, preferably. From this comes the development of the ensemble of new rites in the Easter liturgy, extremely important from the third century on — those of the solemn baptism of the catechumens, whose instruction was carried out with greater care during the weeks which preceded the feast. An author of the third century, St. Hippolytus, has left us valuable information on the subject.

Let us note first of all the suitability of the union of the baptismal rite with a feast which commemorates simultaneously the death and the resurrection of Christ. What is baptism, in reality? An immersion in holy water in union with the death of Jesus, and an emerging in union with His resurrection. Thus are applied to us the redemptory merits of Jesus, inasmuch as we die as aged men and rise up again with a new life, a divine life, the life of Jesus resurrected. Now all this was already signified by the blood of the paschal lamb in the Passover of the Jews. The blood of the lamb had preserved the first-born of the Israelites from the death that

had struck down those of the Egyptians. It had saved the people from the servitude of the Pharaoh. It had been the prophetic symbol of the blood which saved mankind from the servitude of the devil and from eternal death to which it had been doomed since the fall of Adam. Baptism is the sacrament which accomplished this deliverance. Since, moreover, the medium of the sacrament is water, it realizes another symbolism of the Old Testament directly related with the primitive Passover, the passage of the Red Sea when the people, guided by a column of fire, found freedom while their oppressors were wiped out.

It is not surprising, then, that among the rites of the paschal feast of the Christians those of baptism took on a considerable importance. The mystery of the feast itself drew them to it. But at what epoch and under what circumstances and in which churches this solemn baptism was united for the first time to the Easter Feast it would be impossible to say. The only thing which is certain is that at the beginning of the third century it was already an ancient custom, and St. Hippolytus is able to affirm that it was here a question of an apostolic tradition.

Let us summarize some of the details on the Easter feast such as he describes it in one of his books which, to the point, is entitled, *Apostolic Tradition*. He informs us that at Rome the Sunday of Easter was regularly preceded by two days of fasting, Good Friday and Holy Saturday. At the beginning of the night from Saturday to Sunday, the Bishop gathers together the catechumens admitted to baptism. He imposes his hands on them, exorcises them, breathes on their faces, makes a sign of the cross on their foreheads, their ears, their noses, while pronouncing the liturgical formulas. We can recognize here the beginning of the solemn rite of baptism such as we celebrate it even today. Then all the faithful being little by little gathered together in the church, the long vigil, taken up with readings and instructions, begins, which prepares everything for both baptism and at the same time the feast of the Resurrection. Finally when the night is over, "when the cock crows", says St. Hippolytus, the Bishop blesses two urns of oil, the oil of exorcism and the oil of

thanksgiving. Then a procession is organized. The catechumens are led to the baptismal font. They renounce, each in his turn, the devil and his pomps and works. They are anointed with the oil of exorcism, disrobed and immersed in the baptismal font. The children go first, then the men, and lastly the women, who have to uncover their tresses and take off all their jewelry. Each one must make a triple immersion and each recite an Act of Faith, first to the Father, then to the Son and lastly to the Holy Spirit. When he emerges from the water, the baptized is anointed with the oil of thanksgiving. Immediately afterwards, the Bishop gives the sacrament of confirmation to the newly baptized by means of chrism applied to the forehead and a simple sacramental formula. Then he gives each one the kiss of peace which is the indication that he receives him into the family of faithful, and from this point the baptized are then mingled with the other faithful who also give them the kiss of peace.

At this point the night is over, dawn brightens the sky, and the Easter Mass is solemnly celebrated. At the offertory are offered not only bread and wine for the sacrifice, but also a mixture of milk and honey, "for the accomplishment", says St. Hippolytus, "of the promise made to our forefathers of that land where milk and honey flowed, which is the flesh of Christ whereby the faithful are nourished as little children!" Thus, when the baptized are to make their first communion at the end of the Mass, they add symbolism to reality. It will no longer be, however, a symbolic lamb which they will eat after having partaken of the flesh of Christ. This symbol of the Last Supper is replaced by another which signifies that the baptized are "new-born" in Christ.

The Bishop gives a sermon in the course of the Mass to explain to the neophytes the meaning of the communion, and when the moment arrives, he breaks the consecrated bread and gives a piece of it to each one, saying, "The bread of Heaven in Christ Jesus", and each one answers "Amen". The consecrated bread is received in the right hand and thus put into the mouth. Yet one might even take a piece of it home with him. It is for this reason that St. Hippolytus makes this curious recommendation: "Let those who are due

to receive baptism not take with them other than the urn which each is supposed to take for the Eucharist."

We possess an ancient paschal homily which is inspired by a work of St. Hippolytus on Easter.¹ We see by it that at this epoch the feast of Easter still commemorated the Passion of the Lord. It explains in particular that the blood and water which flowed from His side are the symbols of Baptism and the Eucharist, the two great sacraments of which the administration constituted from then on the essentials of the liturgy of that great feast. Already, however, in the following century the idea of the Resurrection was to completely supplant that of the Passion.

At the beginning of the fourth century a great event occurred. Constantine was converted to Christianity, and with him the Roman Empire became Christian. The mother of the Emperor, St. Helen, consecrated great sums of money to the edification of splendid churches to honor the Holy Places where the Lord had lived and where the Redemption of mankind was brought about. Then there quickly began a great flow of pilgrimage which was not to cease from that time to this, to venerate Bethlehem or the Holy Sepulchre. It was customary to go there above all at the time of Holy Week, and there, in the same places where all the episodes of the Passion were unfolded, it was natural that the piety of the faithful should have caused a desire to relive them day by day. The clergy entered wholeheartedly into such a praiseworthy devotion, and an extremely rich and expressive liturgy was organized at Jerusalem, which a pious Spanish nun, Etheria, has described to us, after having assisted at it, at the beginning of the fifth century.²

Palm Sunday saw take place the procession which was later to be adopted by the Roman liturgy and thus extended to all the churches. Holy Thursday and Good Friday com-

1. Cf. P. Nautin, *Homelies pascales*, I. (Sources chretiennes), 1950

2. D. Cabrol, *Les eglises de Jerusalem* (cf. the *Peregrinatio Sylviae*) *et la liturgie au IIe siecle*, 1895, p. 91-120; *Sacris erudiri*, I, 1948, p. 181-205; D. Dekkers and Mlle. Christine Mohrmann, in *Vigiliae Christianae*, IV, 1950, p. 119-123.

memorated the Last Supper and the Crucifixion, and in conclusion, Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday have no other object than to celebrate the Resurrection of the Lord.

On the morning of Holy Saturday Terce and Sext were celebrated as was customary, but None, which should have been said at three o'clock in the afternoon, was left out, because at that hour was begun the Paschal Vigil in the basilica of Golgotha. There were read long passages from the books of Moses and the Prophets; psalms were chanted, and then came the already traditional liturgy of the preparation of the catechumens for baptism. Toward the end of the night came the blessing of the fonts, then baptism of the catechumens. Hardly had they been baptized than they were led to the grotto of the Holy Sepulchre from which the Lord had risen, thus bringing into direct relationship the grace of the baptismal regeneration with the resurrection of the Savior. The Bishop entered the Holy Sepulchre first to pray for the neophytes. During this time hymns were sung. Then all came back in procession to the nave of the basilica where the faithful awaited the return of the Bishop and the newly-baptized. The vigils came to an end. The Bishop gave a homily to the people, and, at dawn, the Easter Mass was celebrated, somewhat rapidly, as all concerned were greatly fatigued. During Easter Day, the people went in procession to the Cenacle where the first apparition of the risen Lord had taken place.

As can be seen by this liturgy which was developed for the whole of Holy Week, nothing remains any longer in the paschal vigil or in the Easter Sunday portions which recalls the Last Supper, the Passion or the death of the Lord on the cross. These mysteries had been commemorated each on its anniversary day, and Easter no longer retains but one meaning, the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is henceforth a feast of joy, of *Alleluia*. It is the great feast for Christians. This fact is moreover, rendered more manifest by the amplitude given the baptismal liturgy. Easter has become a day of solemn baptism, *par excellence*. The catechumen who passes from the death of original sin to divine life is united with Christ who passes from the death of the tomb to the glorious life of eternity. At this same period St. Ambrose of Milan

said of the feast of Easter, "It is the day on which baptism is extended to the whole world." It was to be this magnificent liturgy of Jerusalem which all the churches were to tend to imitate and which was to contribute to a great extent in giving, in the course of time, the present organization to our liturgy.

Still one important rite is lacking which our paschal vigil could not do without, the very solemn ceremony which marks the beginning with the blessing of the new fire, the blessing of the paschal candle and the chant of the "Exultet". We can trace the origin of these rites from the end of antiquity.¹

This ceremony is attached to a very ancient religious custom practiced by the pagans themselves before the appearance of Christianity. In each house, in the evening as night came on, a little liturgical ceremony was observed for the lighting of the lamps. This custom was taken into the Church, and an office called the *Lucernarium*, placed before or after Vespers, asked God's blessing on the light which was lighted to be able to continue to serve Him through the night. The *Apostolic Tradition* of St. Hippolytus which we have already abundantly cited contains a beautiful prayer for the *Lucernarium* such as it was practiced at the beginning of the third century.

It was normal that at the beginning of the great paschal vigil as exceptional solemnity should have been given to the *Lucernarium*. We can nevertheless follow the evolution which has brought about the transformation of the *Lucernarium* into the rite of the paschal candle. It seems, to all intents and purposes, that the usage of the paschal candle was not of Roman origin. Primitively at Rome we find a rite derived from the *Lucernarium*; on Holy Thursday lamps were set aside by which were lighted, on Holy Saturday, two candles but without any particular solemnity. The blessing of a single paschal candle seems to have been in usage in upper Italy from the fourth century. In conclusion, the most ancient evidence which we have of this ceremony constituted

1. *Dictionnaire Arch. et Lit.*, article "Paques".

as it is today takes us back to Pavia at the time of the Bishop Eunodius, who died in 521.

After having lighted the great candle which is to illuminate the long pascal night, the pontiff gives it immediately to the deacon. The latter chants his song of praise in a long prayer which in primitive times he composed himself, but which since then has been fixed in that incomparable chant, of Gallic origin, which is the "Exultet." The deacon compares it with the column of fire which anciently had guided the Israelites through the Red Sea. He incenses it and affixes to it the grains of incense in the form of a cross. Henceforth, its light is to be a symbol of the faith which awaits the dawning of eternal day.

Thus is the paschal liturgy quite complete in the sixth century. We can note, however, at least for Gaul, during Merovingian times, a very remarkable manner of executing it.

Recent research and some ancient evidence has shown that at this time the bishops had three edifices put up in their episcopal cities, two churches and a baptistry. The first church contained the throne or cathedra. This was the Cathedral. This church, dedicated generally to Our Lady, was used for teaching. The second church, on the contrary, was reserved for the celebration of the sacrifice of the Mass. Within it was located an altar which, of course, contained relics of the martyrs. This basilica was also called the Martyrium, and it was dedicated most often to St. Stephen, the first martyr. Lastly, between these two basilicas was located the baptistry, the patron for which was St. John the Baptist. This suggests that the Easter feast must have been carried out in the three buildings. The paschal evening was observed in the Cathedral where the Bishop gave the last instructions to the catechumens. Then the baptism took place in the baptistry. Finally, the Easter Mass and the first communion of the neophytes took place in the martyrium.

This organization disappeared in the course of Carolingian times. It was then preferred to have only one basilica, but very much larger, and often the baptistry itself was in-

stalled there. This state of affairs was universally adopted at the moment romanesque architecture was developed. Also, from then on the paschal ceremony took place exactly as in our day, with the progressive disappearance of adult baptisms. The fatigue occasioned by the night of vigil has led to the setting back of the office to Saturday morning, but the Church has never completely accepted the viewpoint of this softening, and now she encourages us anew to relive the great night of Redemption.

BRIEF NOTES ON THE CHANT OF THE MASSES OF HOLY WEEK AND EASTER¹

by Dom Joseph Gajard

The liturgy of Christmas, as we have said elsewhere,² can be considered as the greeting given by the Church to the Word made flesh, and more particularly, the Office of Matins as a vigil around a cradle.

In the same way, we can state that the liturgy of Holy Week and Easter is a long contemplation, very ardent, or, if you will, a sort of reconstitution, mystic but real . . . and very alive, of all the episodes which marked the death and the resurrection of Christ.

It is, moreover, a marvelously flexible reconstitution, like that for Christmas and like those of the other great occasions of the liturgical year. Although again, from Holy Wednesday or even from Palm Sunday to the morning of Easter itself we are manifestly assisting in the unfolding of a real drama . . . almost hour by hour . . . it would be exposing ourselves to a deception to look for a rigorous logical linking together of the succession of prayers and chants. I can only repeat here what I said of Christmas: there is nothing which gives the feeling of "composition," strictly speaking. Everything is simple and full of life. This is a living being, the Church, who *watches*, who feels compassion for the suffering

1. These notes were written some time ago at the request of the "Comite national d'assistance aux Prisonniers de guerre en captivite", to be sent into all the prison camps, oflags and stalags. The haste with which they had to be written and the limited space available explain their fragmentary and hurried character, such as the too unequal a development given to the commentaries. These are, however, not so much analyses of the pieces, strictly speaking, as merely general indications in which are mixed both musical and religious aspects and practical advice. Rather than rewrite them, and in spite of their inadequacy, we have thought it best to reproduce them almost as they stand, save for that which has to do with Easter, where it was necessary to expand a bit those points which, because of lack of space, had hardly been broached.

2. Cf. *Revue Gregorienne*, 1923, p. 175.

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of her beloved Lord, who is loving, and who chants naturally and without constraint that which is in her heart. This is contemplation.

It is not within the scope of these notes to sketch, even in its larged profiles, the general make-up of this admirable week with all the complexities of its rites and prayers. The Liturgy, extremely opulent, here attains its culminating point, just as its object, the mystery which it celebrates and relives for us is the mystery par excellence, that toward which converges the whole schematic order of the Redemption and supernatural life, the "*Mysterium Christi*" which embraces everything, time and eternity.

The outline of these humble notes is much more modest. We shall only discuss the inspired melodies which clothe the texts of the prayers. We shall even then be forced to limit ourselves to a certain few, the richness of the chants following so closely, as it does, the richness of the rites and the formulas. Almost all of them deserve to be cited and given a commentary, their beauty and power lend so much force and relief to the liturgical texts. It is clear that those persons who of their own accord make abstractions from the melody, considered as a useless luxury, in order to maintain only the text, deprive themselves of a great aid, for it is often the melody which makes the true meaning clear, as well as the scope and the atmosphere of the Church's prayer. We shall speak here only of the Masses, and further in our desire to be brief, we shall restrict ourselves to the three last days of Holy Week and to Easter Sunday.

THE MASS ON HOLY THURSDAY

The Mass of Holy Thursday does not contain any pieces which belong exclusively to it. All of them are borrowed from other masses. They are not the less suitable, however.

Introit *Nos Autem*

The Introit *Nos autem*, despite the *gloriarī oportet*, in which could be read something of an enthusiastic nature, is,

on the contrary, serious, more so than usual for pieces of the fourth mode. The beginning and the end undulate simply around *fa*, without great movement, and the constant B flats contribute in emphasizing still more this atmosphere of reflection. Only twice does the melody rise up, and in a great upward sweep of strong character leaps up to high *do* in order to throw into relief the *Domini nostri Jesu Christi* and the *salus, vita*.

In spite of the opening words, it is not we ourselves with whom we are here concerned, but the Lord only and His glorious Cross, now become for us the principle of life and the resurrection. If, obviously, we are to bring out in the chant these two clearly accented passages, we must nevertheless not fail to render the whole piece with firmness and great expression. Often it is sung too slowly, with the effect that it loses all its character. It is serious, but not sad. It is a solemn affirmation in full recognition of the glorious mystery of the Cross. As such, it requires a good movement, which is tempered at the cadences only to launch itself again with the same gentle vigor in the following phrase. What is more, we shall not fail, in the verset, to bring out well the B natural, which, coming after all the B flats, in the body of the piece itself, serves to make them stand out in great clarity.

Gradual *Christus Factus Est*

The Gradual *Christus factus est*, common to the Mass and to the Office of Tenebrae, which it closes off each day, is one of the most famous pieces of Holy Week. Many think it to be one of the greatest masterpieces of Gregorian art. For all this, it seems that this is only an adaptation to an anterior melodic type. It is an adaptation, nevertheless, which is marvelously successful, so well does the melodic line follow and display the meaning of the text . . . the opposition between the humiliation and death on the Cross, in the first part, and, at the beginning of the verse, the triumphal exaltation of which the Cross was the necessary condition and the ransom: *Propter quod et Deus*.

The first part is naturally serious, broad (I do not say slow), and very expressive. Take care not to distend and cut

apart too much the neumes of *crucis*. All of this final syllable which, with its drop of a fourth followed by an almost horizontal undulation, can lend itself to a soft and somewhat languishing execution should do just that, remaining firm and well-rhythmed with extreme gentleness.

Then, after a good silence, the verse springs up, rebounds at the fifth and then quickly attains and even surpasses in its *elan* the octave above the tonic. Give it out joyously and from the heart in a movement clearly different from that which precedes it, without, however, any sense of hurry. The large intervals and the descending curves of *illum*¹ call for, on the contrary, a certain amplitude. Finally comes the new impulse of *dedit illi*, followed, on *nomen*, by a larger and more weighty movement (I do not dare to say "emphatic"), closing in the returning calm and gravity of *super omne nomen*.

Offertory *Dextera Domini*

This is a piece of the second mode on *la*. It demands much more firmness and warmth, a very broad and assertive movement, notably the *fecit virtutem*, which, successor of the *Domini*, quite held in and very expressive, should rise in a vigorous *crescendo*, opening out into a well-poised cadence on the torculus, well rounded-off. The second *Dextera Domini*, prepared by all that has gone before, breaks forth at a high pitch, with long repercussive tenutos on the dominant which require a great clarity of articulation, and end up with the joyous *elan* of *exaltavit me*.

Do not be afraid to bring out the very marked opposition between *non moriar* and *sed vivam* by setting well in relief the two little words *non* and *sed*, both musically very accented, even though grammatically they are not (on *sed* put the intensity on the *sol*, on the upbeat, slightly held back and sliding lightly and without hurrying to the *tristropa*). Then after the expressive cadence of *vivam*, there comes a new and enthusiastic *elan*, the last one, on *narrabo opera*, which crowns the beautiful vocalise of *opera Domini* (the third *Domini*!) wherein is affirmed so much affable confidence.

1. Cf. *Nombre Musical Gregorien*, I, p. 275 ff.

Communion *Dominus Jesus*

The Communion opens with a little historic preamble which has no other purpose than that of leading to the words of the Lord . . . something moderns might call, in short, a "composition to set the scene"! After a somewhat well-defined initial formula (which further on will serve as leit-motiv) to present the main character in question, the Lord, comes, on a very simple recitative, very typical of mode II, oscillating between *fa* and *re*, with its cadences first on the dominant, then on the tonic, a rapid run-down of the events: the supper and the washing of the feet, the whole scene bathed in a wonderful atmosphere of gentleness.

On the recitative follows suddenly the *scitis*, as an interrogation, very weighty and of a fine smoothness, too, with its drop back to *mi*. Let us note the firm and gentle insistence on the low *do* of *vobis* and on these repetitions of *ego Dominus et Magister*, which, taking up without weakening the alternation of *re-fa*, calls up once more the leit-motiv from the beginning. The phrase concludes on the dominant in the manner of a question as though punctuated by suspension dots. Then on the same soft tone, and, if I may say it, almost of humility, and maintaining the same musical motif, imperceptibly broadened, the great commandment of brotherly love is given out.

This piece which at first seems to present nothing very characteristic is in reality singularly evocative of the atmosphere which prevailed in the Cenacle on that unique evening at the moment of the great revelations which the Apostle St. John has recorded for us. The dominant idea is one of reserve and close intimacy.

The execution will take its interpretation from all these nuances. There will be a prevailing softness in the ensemble with a very simple and tranquil movement. There will be a fine *crescendo*, but with reserve, I should prefer to say "interior", on the *scitis* and the *vobis*, and a great softening on the *ego Dominus et magister* . . .

THE MASS OF THE PRESANCTIFIED ON GOOD FRIDAY

The chant of the Passion.

After the two opening Tracts comes the solemn chant of the Passion according to St. John, identical with the chant of the Passion according to St. Matthew as sung on Palm Sunday. It is a long recitative of a magnificent soberness and of a perfect harmoniousness, marvelously well adapted to the evangelical account whose absolutely calm tone has often been remarked on, a tranquil cast, almost without emotion. There is no subjective note . . . nothing but the succession of facts without commentary. By way of parallel we have in our *Cantus Passionis* much less a "chant" than a "reading", ornate, to be sure, but a reading all the same. It is a *recto tono* with, at the end of each member of the phrases as musical punctuation of the text, rendering it clearly intelligible, a very simple little cadence which contents itself with bringing out, in conformity with the laws of Gregorian composition, the last tonic accent.

In sum, this is nothing more than the solemn tone of the Lessons of Matins with its three regular cadences, the flex, the metrum and the punctum. The two other parts, those of the Synagogue and the Lord only leave this recitative on *do* to take it up again at a fourth higher or a fifth lower, respectively, with symmetrical flex metrum and punctum of identical design, save for the interval modifications required by the tonality, which musicians know well. (The part of the Lord has, it is true, two cadences for the punctum, one a half-close on *re* for the mediant cadences, the other a full close on the tonic for the final cadences. This final cadence on *fa*, arrived at by a modulation and a graceful undulation, makes the part of the Lord the principal one, that which concludes and sets the "tone.") It would hardly be possible to fail to appreciate the artistic result produced by the combination of these three parts with their analogous formulas which continually mingle and answer each other. There is here an equilibrium, a certain harmoniousness which we cannot help but feel.

As to the performance, it must be — do we have to say it? — simple. It should be a reading in which we should try, first and foremost, to observe the rules of good reading: moderate speaking tone, preferably somewhat lively, correct pronunciation of the vowels and consonants, perfect Latin accentuation, intelligent breaks, while bringing out when called for through delicate nuances such and such a detail of the text, one of those little subtleties which show that we know how to read expressively. Also it is obvious that the part of the Lord should “sing” a bit more, above all at the final cadence which will be given in a sustained and soft voice, in a progressively broadening movement.

These latter suggestions apply *a fortiori* to the chant of the last Gospel, an ornate recitative, of a straightforward and pure tonality, chanting alternately on *la* and *do* and returning through a beautiful cadence to *la* which was the preferred recitation note for the ancients. Give it out broadly, softly, with both great expression and, at the same time, reserve. Do not dissipate this atmosphere of mystery which flows all along this strange melopeia and envelops it completely in a penetrating and indefinable charm.

Antiphon *Ecce Lignum Crucis*

It is hardly necessary to speak of this antiphon, its execution is so obvious, as is its design.

The first words, *Ecce lignum Crucis*, sung by the celebrant alone during the display of the Cross, are heavy with meaning and full of the gravity of the feelings which fill the hearts of all in the course of this Good Friday function, completely consecrated to the commemoration of the drama of Calvary. Although the melodic line rises somewhat progressively at *in quo, etc.*, to make explicit that which is contained implicitly in the opening, the tone does not change. The same solemn and reflective gravity is maintained.

Then, however, everything changes abruptly. This is the reaction of humanity in the fervor which the Passion created, the cry which leaps spontaneously from the heart: Come, let

us adore it. The very assertive melodic impulse of the tonic accent, which climbs to *do* by the modulation of the B flat and which is prepared by the descent which serves as transition on the initial climacus, must be of great vigor, an ardent cry, charged with adoration, — then to give place immediately to the musical gesture of adoration in accord with the material gesture of kneeling. There follows a great descending curve, very full and soft in its conclusion with an *adoremus* which is very “singing” and which concludes peacefully in the inwardness of adoration.

The triple repetition of this antiphon, raised each time a full tone, gives to this *Venite adoremus*, particularly to the third repeat, a splendid power of expression which is marvelously fitting.

The Reproaches

During the Adoration of the Cross are sung the famous “Reproaches”, addressed in the form of a long complaint by the Lord to His people, on a note of softness and tenderness. The melody of the “refrain” *Popule meus* remains at first in the lower registers and by a very harmonious gradation, rises gently, by step-wise progression, then by more marked intervals, expressive of the suffering of Christ’s soul, only to fall back heavily on the tonic and terminate by a calling to mankind, yet more firm, to answer: *Responde mihi!* All these nuances should be obviously interpreted by appropriate crescendos and decrescendos.

The first three verses, which are more developed and which hardly do more, in sum, than develop melodically the theme of the refrain, are interspersed with the chant of the “Trisagion”, or triple invocation to God thrice holy, which is sung alternately in Greek and Latin. These invocations must be given in a quite rapid movement, and in any case, clear, without overdoing it, in a good rhythm in the manner of an affirmation. In regard to the third one, *Agios athanatos*, a broadening of the two first acclamations, it calls for a somewhat broader type of movement, a very warm and vibrant vocal tone, giving full value to the beautiful ascent of

athanatos with its B natural, which coming after the B flat should sound forth in a bright light. There is the same nuance of suppliant faith, so sure of being heard, in the great appeal, *eleison imas*, given out to the end in vigor and firmness.

The other verses, interspersed only by the reprise of the refrain *Popule meus*, are, says Dom Gueranger, "of the greatest dramatic interest". There is in each of them the parallelism between the benefactions of Christ toward the Jewish people and the indignities which He has received in return. Bring well into relief the two little words which begin each half verse, *ego* and *tu*, the whole thing being, moreover, as well as the recitative itself (going back, no doubt, to the furthest origins of Latin psalmody), of infinite softness, like a great plaint in which are revealed all at once all the suffering and all the love which filled the heart of the Lord at the hour of His Passion and His Death.

Antiphon *Crucem tuam*

Then follows the admirable antiphon *Crucem tuam* which should rise in a single spurt in a great impulse of faith and love, like the response of mankind to this love of the Lord. Accent and mark the rhythm of the beginning well by bringing out clearly the *B natural* of *Domine*. Then, little by little, by a long and harmonious falling back, the melody poises itself softly and ardently on *glorificamus*. The tone changes, the enthusiasm gives way to a much more intimate and profound contemplation, and we have, on the low notes of the fourth mode, a meditation on the fecundity of the mystery of the Cross from which has come the joy of the world. It is a meditation, moreover, very much alive; we not in fact the recasting and in a sense the rebounding of the melody on *venit* and *gaudium* to spread out on the final torculus of *universo*.

Hymn *Pange Lingua*

If time remains, the hymn *Pange lingua gloriosi lauream certaminis* with its refrain *Crux fidelis*, one of the most beautiful of all the Gregorian hymnody beyond any question. It will be rendered in an ample movement marking faithfully all

the intensive nuances so clearly indicated by the melody. The final part of the first verse above all, *arbor una nobilis* should spring up in fullest elan, broad and very supple, and we shall not fail to bring out well, in a soft and rounded fashion, all the upbeat accents which mark out the descent of the second and third verses and confer on the whole of this hymn, though very enthusiastic, a marked note of grace and freshness. If the hymn must be sung, it would be good, it seems to me, to sing it immediately after the Reproaches, in such a way as to end up with the triumphal antiphon *Crucem tuam*.

Hymn *Vexilla Regis*

Again we have a powerful and triumphant chant, marvelously paced, which terminates the series of chants of this wonderful function, the hymn *Vexilla Regis*, of Venantius Fortunatus. Accompanying the solemn procession which brings to the major altar the sacred Host in reserve since the day before in the repository, it should obviously ring out in a broad and powerful rhythm in which we must avoid triplets of any other of those irregularities which could lessen to some extent the brilliance of the chant. Here again we shall strive to underline with a well-graded crescendo the two ascents to the heights of the first and third verses, then drop back without hurrying to the beautiful low notes of the cadence.

The hymn being finished, everything is silent, and more impressive even than the chants is the great silence of the Mass of the Presanctified, broken into only by the celebrant for the chant, in a medium voice, of the *Pater* and the *Libera nos* which follows.

THE HOLY SATURDAY FUNCTIONS

If it were possible for us to study here, even rapidly, one of the most characteristic Offices of the holy days, the Office of Tenebrae, the Matins and Lauds of Holy Saturday would appear to us, such as they really are, as the transition between the commemoration of the sufferings and death of the Lord and the joy of His resurrection. In reality, the tone is quite different. Texts and melodies are notably softened. It suf-

fices to cite the antiphons of the first nocturn of Holy Saturday and responses like *O vos omnes* and above all, the incomparable *Ecce quomodo moritur justus*. It is truly a funeral vigil around a tomb, of which we know in advance that it no longer contains its captive: "O mors, ero mors tua . . . Nec dabis Sanctum tuum videre corruptionem". Also at the end of Lauds, as though to sum up and throw into strong relief all that, in the course of the Office, had been said to calm our hearts, rings forth the verse *propter quod et Deus exaltavit illum* . . . , which clearly foretells the triumph of Easter morning.

It is perhaps interesting to note that at the same hour (the afternoon of Good Friday) which recalls the anniversary of Christ's death, the Church already calls His resurrection to our notice, as though she wished to show us by this that these are not two different mysteries, but two directly bound together, one to the other, as mutual functions, or, rather, the successive stages of a single mystery, which, taking place in time, had to take place part by part from the Nativity to the Ascension and even to Pentecost, but from which no element may be disjoined, all being indissolubly linked in the divine thought and forming a single unity, the "Mysterium Christi".

Be that as it may, the functions of Holy Saturday are in their entirety accompanied in this light. Already the feast of Easter is beginning. We know, moreover, that this Office is nothing but the anticipation of that which formerly had filled the whole eve of Easter. This function, the most beautiful of the year, the most complete, too, magnificent in the ensemble of its rites and its formulas, only contains, however, a few pieces of its own of real interest from the musical standpoint. There is hardly more than, at the beginning, the *Exultet*, and, in the course of the Mass, the *Alleluia*, but these, at least, merit our examination.

Exultet

The *Exultet* is beyond any doubt, among all the liturgical recitatives, that in which lyricism attains its highest scope of expression. The text almost defies all analysis. The Church

sings here, without any restraint, with a marvelous suppleness, all the sentiments which arise in its heart at the memory of that incomparable night when Christ, risen from the dead, brings to all creation the fullness of life. Allusions, symbols, historic realities, all are evoked with an extraordinary freedom in which thanksgiving and praise blend continually with the historical account and the prayer.

That can seem to be a risky proposition to adopt a melody to such a long lyric effusion, and yet it was achieved. Oh, it seems, the effort was negligible; the basis of this recitative is nothing but the solemn chant of the Preface, on the other hand a splendor of solidity and harmoniousness in itself. Here the theme has been, however, if I may say so, managed by the hand of a master, by an artist of genius. Without ever upsetting the line of the primitive tone, he has been able to introduce variants, mostly insignificant, but sufficient to interpret the nuance of solemnity or of joy desired. Without even speaking of the very different beginning and keeping ourselves restricted to the body of the *Exultet* itself, it is the little inflection up and down which picks up the accent and brings out the characteristic word, for example, the *Dominum Nostrum Jesum Christum* of the beginning, or the joyous and light little intonation which accompanies the *Haec nox est*, etc., or the solemnity of the four O's: *O mira circa nos . . . O inaestimabilis . . .*, etc.

It goes without saying that all these nuances should be preserved by the Deacon who has the great honor of chanting this hymn of praise. It is no longer here a question of a simple reading, even of a chanting, and to content oneself with giving everything uniformly on the same level and at the same rate under the pretext of the uniformity of the indivisible beat would be deplorable. The tempo should be perpetually in flux, the voice as flexible as possible, now broad, warm and vibrant, now by contrast light and joyous, according to the text and the melody. It would be well, too, to make distinctions and mark the end of each of these phases with an *allargando* as appropriate. In short, the Deacon must "sing", must really be the representative of the Church of which he must know how to interpret the full enthusiasm. I

shall add that he must, however, scrupulously take care not to fall into mannerisms or false emphasis! It is not up to him to show off his voice or his musical talent. There is nothing to add to the text that he sings and which constantly binds to the most rich sort of lyricism a tranquil sobriety. He must only be an interpreter, but an intelligent and ardent one.

Alleluia, Confitemini Domino

As for the *Alleluia* of the Mass, very solemn because of all the ceremonies which surround it, it will suffice to here clarify the interpretation. It is made up of two very distinct parts, the word *Alleluia* and the verse which follows.

The *Alleluia* calls for a broad movement, very full, which is not to say, however, that it should be dragged, as so often happens. It should be, on the contrary, held up by a good rhythm, bringing out well the impulse of the torculus' and clivis and their re-descent to the double *sol*, which imperturbably falls in place to punctuate the progress of the melody toward the final part, a progress of imposing solidity which will gain considerably by being accompanied by a progressive crescendo from the beginning to the cadence, in which the binary movement should be well marked.

The Verse, on the contrary, in full contrast with that which has gone before, is all that can be imagined as more joyous and lively (that does not mean irregular and jerky); attacked in a very alert movement which should advance with great fluidity which holds back none of the neums, all of which are light, (except *bonus*, very expressive), with, however, a slight rallentando on *misericordia ejus*, which brings about the beautiful and sonorous cadence of the *Alleluia*.

Antiphon of Vespers

This impression of youthful alacrity should obviously be also that of the last prayers of the Mass, the antiphons *Alleluia* and *Vespere autem Sabbati* and the *Ite Missa est*, of which the two *alleluias* should be given out with full expression and in a lightly broadened movement.

THE EASTER MASS

The Easter mass offers a typical example of the suppleness and the astonishing variety which governed the composition of our liturgical offices. All the aspects of the mystery are here represented in their turns:

There are, of course, the chants which we expect, those in which the hearts wounded by the meditation of the suffering and death of Christ will at last be able to express to their Master, victor over death and ever-glorious, all their love and also all their gratitude for the work of the accomplished redemption. There are chants of overflowing joy, of alacrity, of spiritual transport. There are, each with its particular note, the *Haec dies*, the Sequence and the Communion (as there were also the Invitatory at Matins and the Alleluia verse on Holy Saturday);

Elsewhere the joy is rendered more interior, more meditative and profound, as in the Alleluia, or it even effaces itself completely in the light of the contemplation of the redeeming work, as in the Offertory;

Finally there is the Introit which resembles no other and is in itself a world apart.

These are flexible enough as categories, we must say, and in no way separated by sealed walls. Gregorian art is far too intangible to permit such imprisonment! We are concerned here only with general aspects.

Gradual *Haec dies*

The Gradual *Haec dies* is basically nothing but the adaptation of a well-known formula, that of the so-called second mode Graduals (of the type of *Justus ut palma* of the common of Confessors non-Pontiff). It recurs very frequently in the Gregorian repertoire, notably during the Advent season, but it is mostly by the *Requiem* of the mass of the dead that it is best known to the ears of the faithful. — It turns out that it is the same type which has served for the *Haec dies* of Easter and elsewhere for the *Tecum principium* of the midnight Mass

of Christmas, but in both places treated in a superior fashion by a composer of genius. He, instead of adapting in a natural fashion the melodic type to the words, has kept the essentials, the general lines. With a freedom, however, an ease and a suppleness which denotes an artist of good stock, he has, without interfering in the least with the harmonious development of his theme, introduced notable modifications of the words of significance, thus setting them that much more in striking relief. At Christmas it was the whole beginning which thus became an original composition. At Easter it is also on the first words of the piece, *Haec dies quam fecit*, and also on those of the verse, *Confitemini Domino quoniam bonus*, in which he avoided using the formula and gave free rein to his creative imagination.

There is in the whole of this intonation a joy, a liveliness, an enthusiasm, a youngness of soul like a splendid springing up. After the initial clavis, carefully poised, the melody unfolds, enthralling in its lightness and sweep, rolling forth on joyous festoons mostly around the note *la*, then next, in a wing-beat bounding to the *do* to hang there for a moment, then finally to sink into repose, after a very happy excursion, on *Dominus* in a beautiful formula common to the second and fifth modes, which achieves with happy fitness the transition to the normal taking up of the classic type of the melody.

Give this whole beginning a very lively, alert and joyous general movement, — regular, of course! In most choirs, this intonation is always taken too slowly, too heavily and too weightily. It is obviously a mistaken notion, and the *c*'s (*celeriter*) of the manuscripts are eloquent. Moreover, this joyous movement should not be interrupted by any of the long notes which are found, for example, on *fecit* and *Dominus*. "Set up" the rhythm carefully. The two double *dos* of *fecit* only look alike on paper; rhythmically, that is to say, in reality, they are quite different. The *fecit* forms a composite rhythm of which the accent *fe* is the arsis which reposes on the thetic double *do* of *cit*. Try it this way. You will see all the life this simple detail of technique gives to these two neums, so often executed in a heavy and lifeless fashion! It is this impetus of *fe* which must give meaning to the whole

vocalise on *cit* and even regulate the arsic pick-up *re-mi* (in which each note maintains its full time value). As for *Dominus*, it will be sung, of course, in a great, full and enthusiastic crescendo into which all the soul should be poured.

Then comes, with *exultemus*, the reprise of the normal melody of the classic type. It is impossible, however, not to remark on how well this melopeia of unhobbled lightness, freshness and fluidity is in accord with the idea of exultation which is the dominant note of the whole piece. The *et laetemur* introduces, however, by its conclusion at least, a nuance of gravity to this joyful movement which blends from everywhere, and it is well suited, on its final with its subtle insistence, the first hint, moreover, of the progressive *rallentando* which should extend over the whole last member *in ea*, at once light and yet with that tiny touch of amplitude which leads to and prepares the last part.

With the verse *Confitemini Domino*, all the joyousness of the beginning is taken up again, that which I called the spiritual transport, to a degree not previously attained. It is even necessary to "put on the brakes" here, to remain master of one's nerves, in order not to let oneself go in disorganized movement. Note with what light grace the melody rolls forth around this *Domino* with a happy satisfaction which cannot be done with! . . . Then comes the *quoniam bonus*, the extraordinary *quoniam bonus*, which introduces a new nuance, that of lost admiration, of the grateful wonder of the soul faced with the splendor of the accomplished work of redemption and the immense love, the "extravagance of love", which it implies. Enter progressively, in the course of this *quoniam* into a more and more insistent movement . . . more broadened out, which should lead in an uninterrupted and vibrant crescendo up to the high double *sol*, attained in "head voice" and with all the softness possible. As for the *bonus*, which is the essential word, render it as broadly, as weightily and expressively as possible (without affectation, however, for it is easy to fall into the precious and ridiculous; these nuances should always remain natural, without ever striving for effect), in a fine ternary rhythm, and with all the vocal warmth you can muster. Who would dare pretend here that the nuances of

the manuscripts, transcribed by our horizontal episemas, are obstacles to the impulses of the soul!

Immediately then, on *quoniam in saeculum*, the rapid and joyous tempo of the beginning returns, with the usual melody of the characteristic type, which is kept to the end with a progressive broadening of the last member, *misericordia ejus*, as earlier at the end of the first part of the Gradual.

Communion *Pascha Nostrum*

The Communion, too, is enchanting in its lightness, and remains such through to the end. Give the movement a great deal of vivacity right from the beginning with a well-launched *Pascha* which lifts up the choir and carries it along. Doubtless the *immolatus est*, with its long quilismatic neume which evokes at this very spot the price which this consuming of the true Pascha, our own, has cost, is somewhat weighty, like *nostrum*, but it seems to me that it should not take away from this piece all its joyousness into which we are once more plunged without delay by the graceful and lively melody (c in the manuscripts) of the cadence *Christus alleluia*.

But here is the second phrase, extraordinary, perhaps unique in the entire repertoire, of a youthful freshness and suppleness. Begun *piano*, it should, after the *itaque*, rendered with imperceptible tenuto, roll forth with all the fluidity and grace possible, without touching the ground, so to speak. as in a sort of flight. Here it is that the ictus must not be material. There is nothing here in truth but "rhythm", a supple line with undulations hardly marked, moving towards the first podatus of *veritatis*, which should be like a conclusion and opening forth of the crescendo and accelerando extended over the whole phrase.

Then comes the triple *alleluia* of the termination, splendid in line, with a melodic and rhythmic development which should weld into a single unity this marvelous acclamation of powerful inspiration and immense joyfulness of movement. Begin it *piano* in a quite broad movement; then from the second *alleluia* assert clearly the crescendo which should lead you to

the third one, very broadened, and sing with all the strength of your lungs (but without the least hardness, and with good placement) in a well-rounded off movement on the pseudo-torculus of *le*, a great ternary arsis which concludes in serenity on the well-regulated binary rhythm of *luia*.

Sequence *Victimae Paschali*

Let us also call attention to the *Victimae paschali*, with its dialogue colored by naivety and freshness and the joyous flights of its conclusion, *Scimus Christum surrexisse*, followed by the very retained great descending curve of *a mortuis vere* which is so accented in affirmation, and of the ardent prayer, so well-rhythmed, of *tu nobis victor Rex miserere*.

Alleluia *Pascha Nostrum*

Is the Alleluia really joyous and overflowing with animation? It is generally thought so. . . . That it is enthusiastic and contains a magnificent lyricism is beyond doubt. For all that, however, this is not necessarily exuberant joy. Both enthusiasm and lyricism are found equally well integrated, sometimes even better, in the expression of deep sentiments which call for great amplitude of movement. Here, no doubt, the beautiful and rich vocalise of *immolatus est* in the verse would easily lend weight to the popular opinion and lend itself wonderfully well to a very alert and joyous movement. The same may be said of the mode of *sol*. There are, however, it seems to me, other indications which would rather suggest that we not jump to too hasty a conclusion. . . .

The vocalise of the *Alleluia*, the jubilus, with its very weighty opening as seen in the manuscripts and its broad intervals, will profit better from a very broad tempo, with clearly marked nuances on the magnificent latter portion, rendered in a great rallentando and accompanied by the warmest possible vocal sonority. After the repeated undulations on the dominant (should we really see these as "trills"?), followed each time by a broad and ample falling back to the tonic brought on by a heavy pressus, do you not feel how solemn and profound the last incise is, with its well-defined binary rhythm and its first drop to *fa* in the lower register

which prepares the *sol*? There is nothing dance-like here, even in a religious sense!

We should note that the manuscripts give this *Alleluia* a second verse which is no longer in use in the liturgy: "*Epulemur in azymis sinceritatis et veritatis*". The melody of this second verse does not at all go against the hypothesis which I have taken the liberty of setting forth here . . .

This *Alleluia* seems to me, I must admit, mysterious, as much in its interpretation as in its architectural structure. It is hard enough to define with precision the melodic articulations of *immolatus est*, as also the exact rhythm of the two middle incisives of the jubilus. All in all, it seems that this piece brings together the two aspects of the paschal feast, joy, mixed with wondering admiration of the mystery of the Redemption, a joy which is profound rather than exuberant . . .

Offertory *Terra tremuit*

There can be no hesitation about the Offertory. We here pass into another world which has nothing in common with the *Haec dies*, the Communion or even the *Alleluia*. We are concerned this time, not with human animation and exultation, but with a very profound and ardent contemplation of the Redemption, or rather, of its repercussions on the whole of creation. The text may at first glance seem only to tell of the events which accompanied the resurrection of the Lord, the quaking of the earth, etc. The melody, however, suggests that in the mind of the composer the scope has been singularly expanded. Note the solemn and grandiose character of its lines, the great abrupt upsurges, very assertive, to say the least, at *et quievit*, *resurgeret*, and *in iudicio*, the almost contortive intervals, the envelopment of the cadence formulas *quievit* and *Deus*, and finally, the unusual deployment of the final *alleluia*, with its very pronounced swing and the insistent repetitions.

We are in the fourth mode, and over the whole of this piece there is, in spite of the sharp elans which I have just noted, a serenity, a majesty, which relates it somewhat with the *Tui sunt* of Christmas. It would seem as though it sang

of the return of redeemed mankind and of all creation to the primitive plan of original justice from which sin had caused a falling away (ROM. VIII), thanks to the work of Justice carried out on the Cross by the Lord, "justus et justificans". Note the extended peacefulness of this *quievit*, which never ceases settling itself down, the elan of *resurgeret*, the entire complacency of *in judicio Deus*, all the fervor of the long melopeia of the *alleluia*, so full of life and so much movement, although it is developed in a very limited ambitus.

All this calls for a very broad tempo, well-defining each of these details, but a vibrant voice, too, full of admiration, gratitude and love.

Introit *Resurrexi*

Lastly, we have an incomparable piece, beyond any doubt without an equal anywhere in the repertoire, the Introit *Resurrexi*, in which the Lord himself, having accomplished the great task for which he had come into the world, presents himself before His Father to express to Him His adoration and love. Here everything is divine; it is ecstasy of God in God. This introit is completely immaterial and spiritual. There is no "movement". It never leaves the fifth *re-la*, save on *mirabilis* which in passing touches the low *do*, as though to give more depth to the prayer. It hardly even touches the extreme notes *re* and *la*, and holds itself mostly to the third *mi-sol*.¹ This is very little for a triumphant chant, but then this is the triumph of a God, of someone beyond the limitations of our nature. It seems to be the echo, translated into created language, of the conversation which takes place within the Trinity.

After the first phrase, which is like a gentle evaluation by the Lord of that which has just been accomplished and the joy of finding himself again with God, there to remain always (note the transcendent peace and tenderness implied in this *adhuc tecum sum*), assert the second a bit more, *posuisti*, etc.,

1. To understand it well it would obviously be necessary that it be restored in its primitive and authentic tenor which gives a great deal more importance to *mi*, too often replaced by *fa* in the Vatican edition (cf. *Revue Gregorienne*, IX, 1924, p. 64 ff.)

with its long notes on *fa* wherein one has such a strong impression of an extended hand, all-powerful, and sing gently the *alleluia* which closes it off, holding back well the two *res* of *ia* (marked with a *t* — *tenete* in one of our manuscripts) and prolonging infinitesimally the final *fa*, so completely ecstatic. Then, after a long silence, the Lord, as though rousing Himself and taking account of Himself, murmurs in a movement of admiration and love: “Ah, truly, Thy works are wondrous”, *mirabilis facta est scientia tua*, rendered in a well-marked crescendo. Lastly, the two *alleluias*, the first with its very gentle alternation of *mi* and *sol* (*leniter*, the manuscripts say here), and the last one, which finishes on *mi*, leave us in this atmosphere of peace, calm and ecstatic contemplation in which we have been since the beginning.

Sing this Introit broadly, without heaviness, however, almost at half-voice, without great shading, and pitched somewhat low. We can easily see what a mis-representation it would be to sing it with loud outbursts or to raise it to an extreme pitch to give it “brilliance” under the pretext that it is Easter. That would be to take away its rightful character and render it completely inexpressive. Sing it, then, in thinking only of Who it is that speaks and of the things He is saying, and you will see this clearly. To understand it, we must to some extent know what Christianity and supernatural life are, the true character of Christian religion, which is to be, above all, not a great exterior demonstration, not a question of sentiment, but an *interior religion*, a *thing of the soul*, an adhering of the whole being to the wholeness of God. It is to know, too, that He who is here involved is of absolute grandeur in which He surpasses us infinitely. It is, lastly, to know that we have no reason for existence except in Him, by Him and for Him. Then this *Resurrexi* will appear to you as a piece apart, as the true song of Easter.

THE MOTU PROPRIO and SACRED POLYPHONY

by Henri Potiron

The *Motu Proprio* of Pius X points out very opportunely that the only official music of the Church is Gregorian chant. It admits, however, on a secondary level, vocal polyphony, on condition that it be inspired of the same aesthetic, and it gives minute details in this regard which we shall take up later.

It proposes to us at the same time as example and model the polyphony of the Renaissance, precisely because by its style and its interpretations of the sacred texts it is very similar to Gregorian chant. This is not to state that in this immense repertoire everything is of the same perfection, even from the liturgical viewpoint. Enough masterpieces remain, however, to make the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries one of the greatest epochs as well as one of the most fecund in all musical history.

The decadence (liturgical) begins with the seventeenth century. The causes are multiple; the Gregorian traditions become more and more a lost art; the birth of dramatic art, the development of the orchestra and of symphonic forms, the spiritual concerts, the oratorio, psalms transformed into cantatas — everything contributes to a confusion of styles. I mean to say, considering the masses above all, that the music incorporated into the liturgical function overflows the framework of it, by its character, its dimensions, and often even by a certain fracas incompatible with the serenity, the peace of the official prayer of the Church.

That is so true that the style remains quite pure in the *a cappella* compositions. In the others, the passages where the voices sing alone or with simple accompaniment still retain the nobility which is called for. Too often, however, the solos or the orchestra betray the outside influence. The music enters into the Temple; it was not born there.

Always it is that this evolution brings about the mass of the spiritual concert type or cantata divided into numbers. Beyond any doubt the *Mass in B minor* of Bach is one of the summits of all music. It is of dazzling craftsmanship, an incomparable richness of inspiration, an ardent piety, tender and mystic, a nobility, a grandeur which no other master has surpassed; all these qualities never cease to move us at each hearing, and even in simply reading it. The proportions of the work are, however, incompatible with the celebration of the Mass itself. The division of each part into separate pieces is equally anti-liturgical. We must say the same for the *Mass in D* of Beethoven, another monument, where the more human sentiment is not always such as is suitable for true church music, in spite of the purity of the intentions which animate it. Besides, the orchestra plays too important a role in this instance. Although shorter, the *Mass in C* is not easily reconciled with the exigencies of the liturgy. As for the masses of Mozart, however admirable they may be and pious in manner, they, too, give too much importance to the orchestra and do not have the form which the texts impose on them. With lesser genius, the masses of circumstance or of contrivance of Lesueur and of Cherubini call for the same reservations . . . and some others. The *Messe de Gran* or the *Messe hongroise du couronnement* of Liszt, in spite of their strictly musical value, are in no sense church music, either.

The case of the *Messe de Sainte Cecile* of Gounod (1855) is much more serious. This time it is no longer a work of circumstance or concert type (at least in the thoughts of the composer). It is a work of *repertoire*, to the point that its success still persists. I have no need to reiterate on the genius of Gounod nor on the quality of his very sincere faith. His mass, however, is the representative type of the mass written for the Church while being at the same time anti-liturgical. The importance of the solos, the repeat of *Gloria* and *Credo* after the Celebrant, the inverted texts or added texts (the *Domine non sum dignus* is sung with two repeats in the course of the *Agnus Dei*), its general form, the somewhat sensual character of the melodic lines so particular to

the author, etc.—all this ought to ban this mass from our repertoires. I understand perfectly that it is religious . . . in Gounod's manner, but not in the manner of the Church. Saint-Saens says somewhere that it appeared to the musicians of the time like a brilliant stroke of lightning in the musical heavens, and this sort of admiring stupor was directed as much to the piety as to the music of the work. This opinion permits us to guess what church music must have been in 1855, in France at least.

Gounod seems to have recognized his error. He was, so to speak, converted. The evolution, already apparent in the *Messe de Jeanne d'Arc*, was achieved in the *Messe Chorale*, composed for the beatification of St. Jean-Baptiste de la Salle and having for theme the intonation of Credo I. *Gloria* and *Credo* begin at the right place; the interpolations and word-shifts have disappeared; the style is more severe and often adopts the fugal form, which Gounod manages with elegance and clarity. There are, however, some lengthenings and excessive repetitions and even some platitudes in the passages of vertical writing. Shorter and yet more severe, but perhaps more dry, is the *Messe de Saint Jean l'Evangeliste*, published after his death (1893), which for the rest is equally very well written for the voices (the organ interludes seem useless to me; the beginning of the *Gloria* (*Et in terra*) could be sung by a single group of voices without interruption instead of being repeated in sections).

In spite of everything, this redressing is significant. A movement toward more liturgical forms was launched. I shall say nothing of the *Mass for Three Voices* of Franck (1860) in which the form of the *Kyrie* is certainly not liturgical (two expositions for the first period, or rather ten or so *Kyries* strung together), in which the *Gloria* is indefensible by admission of Vincent d'Indy himself, and even the *Sanctus* with its chopping syllables at *in excelsis*. This was no doubt a utilitarian work written for the school of Sainte-Clotilde, but so far from the *Symphony in D minor* or the *Beatitudes!* Utilitarian, also, no doubt, are the masses of Th. Dubois, written with care and often quite well, but which

are not over-loaded with music, and in which the liturgy is not always well-respected, either.

Would the liturgical renewal have come then with the movement called "Cecilian," born in Germany about 1868? The aim was to form a modern repertoire in the ancient spirit for the use of the choral societies and adapted to all cases. An excellent commercial operation for the Ratisbon publishers, but the result was musically very mediocre. There was no dramaticism in these measures, no theatrical effect, certainly, but a dullness persisted and, except for some very rare exceptions (to the very extent that the composers rise above this beaten track), an absence of real music . . . formulas exist, nothing more. Perhaps at the epoch of Canon Witt it was excusable to supplant somewhat Gregorian chant as it was presented by the mutilated canonical editions of Pustet, and inasmuch as it was sung woodenly and without rhythm. Since the restoration of the liturgical melodies, however, the choice of this repertoire testifies to a serious indifference in regard to the official chant of the Church. If a polyphonic *Kyrie* must come after the Gregorian introit, the least that can be demanded of it is that it be of a quality, if not equal to that of the introit (which seems rather difficult to me), at least appreciable in the new elements it presents. In the wake of the Cecilian movement the mania for harmonization was extended to the Proper itself—the introits, the graduals . . . have been "faux-bourdonned" and collections published to this effect. Has this practice disappeared? . . . The Cecilian school wished to renew a tradition; its intentions were perhaps excellent, but it was a case of union in mediocrity. In return, at the same period, the masses of Anton Bruckner, in particular the third in E minor composed in 1869, for eight voices and woodwinds, are of an admirable composition and of a very fine religious sentiment (and even liturgical).

Interesting in quite another way were the efforts of Charles Bordes, who, at the helm of his *Chanteurs de Saint-Gervais*, traversed France toward the end of the last century, revealing to more than one musician the magnificent masterpieces of the Renaissance. These performances, and those

he gave at Paris itself had a considerable influence on the public taste. I note, too, that at each concert he directed the singing of a Gregorian piece. At a time when the Vatican edition had not yet appeared, and when we still had the editions of Rheims, Rennes or Paris . . . , interpreted God knows how, Bordes made his choice from the books of Solesmes and adopted the method of Dom Pothier. This was an excellent lesson.

To return to the compositions in the more usual sense, we must call attention to the Mass of Widor (Op. 36), anterior, I believe, to the *Messe chorale* of Gounod. It is, perhaps, the mass as understood from the full organ, but it is church music. It does not arise from outside influences. If in the *Sanctus* Widor has taken some liberties with the text (easy to correct for all that) he at least does not double the intonation of the *Gloria*. There lies the touchstone. Certain passages attain a veritable grandeur. Much posterior (1900), the Mass of Vierne undoubtedly gives too great an importance to the full organ, but it is not a concert mass, and although certain spots seem a bit labored, (in the *Benedictus* mostly) the ensemble is submissive enough to liturgical exigencies. Good Theodore Dubois was converted, too. His *Messe de Saint Remi* (1900) respects the liturgical form; *Gloria* and *Credo* do not double the intonations of the celebrant. Doubtless the solo parts (of little importance, incidentally) gain by being sung by a group of voices, but in the lack of nobility, the general tone is very suitable.

In sum, since the *Messe de Sainte Cecile* or the *Messe a trois voix* of Franck, something has changed. The evolution is far from being concluded, but it has begun. It is traceable at the beginning of the 20th century.

Now it was just at that moment that the *Motu Proprio* appeared. It was not to determine, therefore, a sudden change in habits (so much the more as the old defections were not to completely disappear). On the other hand, the diffusion of the Solesmes editions,—and the method—, had already returned to honor the healthy Gregorian traditions. The 22nd of November, 1903, however, we have a *law*. Such is the profound meaning of the pontifical document.

The declaration was heard, if not understood. Publishers of religious music printed in their catalogs: "Works in conformity with the *Motu Proprio*." Dubois wrote a *Messe en si mineur* for three voices, "conforming with the *Motu Proprio*.¹ This effort honors the man, who was always of a perfect probity. But other composers of the profession of indisputable talent seem to be ignorant of what true liturgical music should be. The Mass of Poulenc, *a cappella*, in G major(?) is neither liturgical in form nor tone. The *Gloria* is repeated, there are syllables chopped into "pizzicato," sudden shadings without relationship to the text, etc., etc. It is true that there is no danger of its encumbering our repertoires, because of its extreme difficulty of performance (a great number of performers is necessary; the intonations are very ticklish; the keeping of the whole thing in ensemble makes conducting it perilous). More recently (1950), that of Bozza (*Mass of His Holiness Pius XII, written in homage to the Holy Year* is the exact title), perhaps less difficult to execute, calls for the same reservations: repeats of the *Gloria* and *Credo*, superposition of the words (*Kyrie* and *Christe*), sometimes without any sense in Latin syntax, inversion of the texts, nearly four *Agnus*, followed by seven *Amens* not called for by the text! etc. Were it not for the reprise of the *Gloria* by the choir, the *Messe des Petits a Saint-Eustache-la-Forêt* of Andre Caplet (the error is due simply to ignorance of the law) would pass as a model of truly religious expression. Caplet, enthusiastic for Gregorian Chant and a true musician, who died prematurely in 1925, might perhaps have given us, once informed in liturgical requirements, a perfect type of polyphonic church music. Bussier is in more than one way, a church musician. He knows the texts too well to commit the same mistakes as Bozza. Even he, however, has sometimes given in to certain habits (reprise of the *Gloria* in his *Messe de Noël*); the sound of bells "in the fields" toward the end of the *Sanctus* of the *Mass of St. Stephen*, however discreet it may be, is, do we not agree, an element forbidden by the *Motu Proprio*? The

1. It is true that later on, immediately after the war of 1914, he was to return to his first love with the *Messe de la Délivrance*! A mass of circumstance and even contrivance.

Messe de Domremy (1949), however, presents a *Kyrie* of irreproachable cut. There are exactly nine invocations, three *Kyrie*'s, three *Christe*'s and three *Kyrie*'s, and the *Gloria* is not doubled by the choir. This mass, conceived for singing out-of-doors with the accompaniment of four trumpets, is for this reason of a very individual character, but however, though somewhat brilliant, it is religious.¹

Other composers or choirmasters, less famous, write masses for repertoire which are easier and better adapted to the average choir, for in sum, the field is left almost free to them by the great musicians. There are first of all the amateurs, in the extreme sense of the word, who know how neither to write nor to compose and have no imagination. Let's not talk about them. There are also the modern "Cecilians," writing correctly (nothing more), composing not as well, but contenting themselves with hackneyed formulas. They will tell you that the music of the Church should be impersonal. What an error! All true music is personal. Josquin is not Palestrina, and Palestrina is not Vittoria. Each has his own touch and his own expression. How was it possible to attribute to Palestrina the responses (magnificent for all that) of Ingegneri, whose style is so different from that of the Roman master? The liturgy alone has its esthetics and its framework. It is thus important that the composer interpret the texts as the Church wishes and that he not go beyond the limits of the framework. Once disciplined, however, the imagination of the musician lives its own life and is not annihilated by the role which is assigned to it. (Even a theatrical scene rests on a text and a situation. The polyphonic Mass also rests on a text, and the situation is that of the liturgical function.)

Certain choirmasters like following the ruts, that is to say, the ready-made ideas, contenting themselves with a sort of rejuvenation (if we may say so) of Cecilian music when they choose their repertoires. It doesn't disturb their habits.

1. In another domain, the *Quinque cantus ad benedictionem Sanctissimi Sacramenti* of Florent Schmitt (1953) are not only of remarkable musicality, but also of a profoundly religious character. Unfortunately, they are not within the grasp of all choirs.

It permits them even to add shadings of all sorts—which passes for interpretation—precisely because it is spineless and in a way invites collaboration. On the contrary, truly original music (I am not saying bizarre) is over their heads and disturbs them. They will perhaps recognize its composition, but they will refuse it any intimate expression.

There remain then, the compositions which, for sundry reasons (above all musical or primarily liturgical), are really music. Certainly there are some in France, but discretion of the most elementary type forbids me to give names and titles. There are also some in other lands: Belgium, Holland, Switzerland, Italy, Germany, etc. The desire to respect the *Motu Proprio* is manifest. The evolution which began toward the end of the nineteenth century and even earlier has thus expanded, encouraged and stimulated by the pontifical document.

All these efforts are, however, dispersed. We do not have a real tradition in the more noble sense of the term, or a school, as had the Renaissance and as the Cecilian movement tried to create. It cannot be a question of picking up the thread which has been cut since the seventeenth century and imitating the sixteenth. Although we may be inspired by the same general esthetics, we can no longer speak the same language. If, then, we group ourselves under the banner of the *Motu Proprio*, we define the type in a precise manner and we are laying the foundations for a tradition and a school.

No doubt we want our music to be pious and of catholic character, that is to say, universal. We take nothing away from the sacred texts and we add nothing to them. We respect the order of the words. We give the voice its essential role, and we do not practice excessive repetitions. But have we thought this over well: "Each part of the Mass and the Office should preserve, *even from the musical point of view*, the aspect and the form which ecclesiastical tradition has given them and which are found to be best expressed in Gregorian chant."?

Thus, a *Kyrie* has nine invocations, grouped, if desired, three by three, that is, three *Kyries*, three *Christes*, three *Kyries*, from which we get a ternary form, with three separate invocations in each period, or three little expositions. This general plan lends itself to a multitude of writing combinations (much as the fugue or allegro with two themes).

Gloria: sixteen invocations which the Vatican edition punctuates with sixteen periods. It is impossible to develop them separately, as this would open the affair up to intolerable length and even to the total absence of unity. In a binary framework, or ternary or four-divisioned one, they can easily be put into groups (according to the meaning and certain obvious parallelisms) as periods, in which intelligent punctuation distinguishes one from another. As for the general unity, it can only be made to jell through inspiration (and some technical processes, obviously), but the spirit moves where it will!

In the same way, three *Sanctus* exactly (or three little expositions), followed by *Dominus Deus Sabaoth*. Then two other periods: *Pleni sunt* and *Hosanna*. The *Benedictus*, of which the text is very short, will stand some discreet repetitions. As for the *Agnus*, the three periods are imposed of themselves.

These details have not always been observed in some excellent masses, and not always during the Renaissance, either. Now that we have a *law*, however, can we not see the advantage which composition itself should gain, not to mention the general unity of composers?

I have only discussed masses. What is more, I have only given some examples, those which were necessary for tracing this historical sketch, without exhausting the list, naturally. In regard to extra-liturgical motets, they should be well inspired by the same principles. The *Tantum Ergo* is, however, the liturgical part of Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. This should be two verses of a hymn as the *Motu Proprio* states, and not an adagio or a cavatina, followed by an allegro! Certain *Genitoris* resemble the final chorus of

an oratorio or cantata. This disparity is inadmissible.

In sum, the musical form should always adapt itself to the form of the text. From this fundamental and second rule is born the definition of church polyphony. It should group us, too, in obedience to pontifical authority. As for the rest, modal or tonal style, thematic unity or variety, subjects borrowed from the Gregorian repertoire or drawn from the imagination, contrapuntal style or a harmonic one, etc., etc., I admit to having my personal preferences, but it is the form, the construction, that is to say, the composition in the etymological sense, which is the most important element, perhaps, too, the most difficult to handle.

If the reader has judged my severity regarding certain works to be excessive, I have not figured to cast doubts on their musical value, sometimes very great, nor above all exclude them from our repertoires because of certain of their errors. I have wished only to confront them with the *Motu Proprio* (posterior to certain ones of them) in order to better clarify our present duty concerning this document which henceforth has the force of *law*, and, moreover, to facilitate our task and thus clarify the future.

LETTER OF HIS EXCELLENCY, MSGR. MONTINI TO HIS EMINENCE, CARDINAL PIZZARDO

Dal Vaticano
21 nov. 1953

Segreteria di Stato
di Sua Santità
No. 313370

Most Reverend Eminence,

The jubilee of the *Motu Proprio Tra le sollecitudini* of Blessed Pius X is about to recall to mind, in Italy and abroad, the wise dispositions by which the great Pontiff, in restoring sacred chant which is an integral part of the liturgy, strove to increase the splendor of the divine cult and to give to the religious ceremonies continually greater efficacy for the sanctification of Christian people.

This document still corresponds as fully, and even in a certain sense, corresponds even more with the present needs. In fact, by reason of the broader diffusion of musical culture and of the greater refinement of artistic taste which can be observed today, the appeal of Blessed Pius X for a nobler and truer sacred music is better understood and found more fitting among all levels of Christian peoples.

It must, however, be added that, in spite of the salutary fruits already produced by the *Motu Proprio* in the domain of sacred music, it cannot yet be affirmed that the wise measures which it contains are observed everywhere and at all times. Has there not been often, too often, occasion to remark that the music performed in the churches leaves something to be desired, either in the poverty of its inspiration, the technical imperfection of its form, or the insufficient preparation of those who perform it.

That this should be contrary to the glorious tradition of the Church appears as obvious if only the care be considered with which she has always placed at the service of the divine

cult all the advancements of the arts, and her constant striving that the liturgy might never lack the aid of sacred music, which is a powerful means for the elevation of souls when piety and faith are there employed in a sincere Christian spirit.

In order to correct the faults, overcome the difficulties and effect the consolation merited by so many good workers who labor in this liturgico-musical restoration in the spirit of the Church, His Holiness has deigned to bestow on me the mission of setting forth for Your Most Reverend Eminence some fundamental points which, by the variety and importance of his high functions, is particularly called for in order to spread its recognition and assure its application by favor of the vigilant care of the Episcopacy. In this fashion, His Holiness intends to commemorate the happy jubilee of the *Motu Proprio* of Pius X, confirmed and enriched in detail by the Apostolic Constitution *Divini cultus sanctitatem* of Pius XI, as also He blesses and encourages the contemporary liturgico-musical movement in the various countries, the efficacious means of a spiritual renewal among the faithful.

In his recent Encyclical *Mediator Dei*, the reigning Pontiff recommends with insistence that the people sing in church. For this, it is necessary first of all that the priest, inasmuch as he is charged with the education of the Christian people and called to preside over the functions of the cult, be in possession of an adequate artistic formation which should be acquired gradually from the first year of the Seminary to the last.

To this end, the Holy Father asks urgently (*inculca*) the integral application of the practical measures already given in the Instruction of the Sacred Congregation of Studies, dated the 25th of August, 1949, an instruction valid for Colleges and Institutes of clerics secular and regular, as well as for Universities, in which it would be praiseworthy to institute special courses, theoretical and practical, in view of the complete formation of the students.

Since, too, the Cathedral is the mother-church of the diocese, the active participation of the Seminarians should not

be lacking for its liturgy on the great feasts, and will add yet more to the splendor of the divine offices. All Sundays and feasts upon which the Seminarians do not go to the Cathedral, they shall celebrate at the Seminary, preparing as it should be done, solemn Mass and sung Vespers, a veritable school of spirituality for Seminarians.

For the young men endowed with particular talents for music and making themselves notable by their liturgical piety, the Superiors of Seminaries shall facilitate the scientific study of sacred chant, and to this end shall send the best of these to the Pontifical Institute of Sacred Music at Rome.

At last today, thanks to the work of the clergy and the piety of the faithful, no country lacks *Scholae cantorum* composed mostly of volunteer singers who consider it a great honor to respond willingly to the invitation of their priests and to give their services in view of a more worthy celebration of the sacred functions.

To aid by all available means such useful initiatives, it is necessary that sacred chant be taught methodically everywhere to the very youngest children from their first years of primary school, as is already the practice with fruitful results in some countries. By zealously forming *pueri cantores* not only will better service at the sacred ceremonies be assured, but there will be, moreover, numerous ecclesiastical vocations called and prepared for the Church.

The Ordinaries will, besides, take care to direct the young people who wish to serve the Church by consecrating themselves to sacred music, not to non-sectarian institutions which do not have that as their aim, but to those dependent on ecclesiastical authority, to the Pontifical Institute of Sacred Music or at least to the Sections in Sacred Music which exist in conjunction with certain very worthy higher Schools of Music, which devote themselves to achieving, with the best of results, that which the Holy See has prescribed in the matter.

Sacred music being an integral part of the liturgy, the Ordinaries should have at heart the will to give all their sup-

port, even financial,—because of their extreme usefulness for the Catholic apostolate—to all Institutions and Associations which have as their purpose the study of religious chant and the diffusion of the most significant art-works of sacred music, such as those who have taken as patron St. Cecilia or St. Gregory the Great, and which it would be fitting to see instituted everywhere.

Finally, it is opportune that the Sacred Congregation of Studies take interest in the diverse Higher Schools of Sacred Music which are rising up providentially in many countries, and which may also, when they are able to present the required qualities, benefit from affiliation with the Pontifical Institute of Rome.

His Holiness has the firmest confidence that this anniversary of the solemn document of Blessed Pius X will not fail to arouse throughout the entire Church praiseworthy initiatives in view of its worthy celebration and its most efficacious application. It will also without doubt contribute to the awakening of liturgical life in the Christian populace, as the Holy Father gloriously reigning has expressed desire for in his Encyclical *Mediator Dei*.

In this hope, His Holiness invokes the insights and the assistance of the Lord on those who work in this sense for the glory of God and to the greatest good of souls, and He sends to Your Eminence with all his heart and to all those who submit themselves to the present norms, the comfort of his Apostolic Benediction.

(Translated from the French)

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